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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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30 June to 2 July 2015
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Organizational matters

Report on the election of the Bureau and on the first regular session, 7 January and 9 February 2015

I. Election of the Bureau

1. On 7 January 2015, the Executive Board elected the Bureau of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for 2015. The Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, Ib Petersen (representing Western European and other States), was elected as President of the Executive Board for the year 2015. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: (a) African States: Third Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Algeria to the United Nations, Bakhta Selma Mansouri; (b) Asia-Pacific States: Minister of the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Barun Dev Mitra; (c) Eastern European States: Minister Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations, Dragana Anđelić; (d) Latin American and Caribbean States: Minister Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations, Maria Paulina Dávila.

2. The outgoing President, Gonzalo Koncke (Uruguay), representing Latin American and Caribbean States, thanked the Executive Board, especially the outgoing Vice-Presidents who had served during his tenure, Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti), representing African States; Helen Beck (Solomon Islands), representing Asia-Pacific States; Daria Wolosiuk (Poland), representing Eastern European States; and Amy Haddad (Australia), representing Western European and other States.

II. Organizational matters

3. The first regular session of 2015 of the Executive Board was held at United Nations Headquarters on 9 February 2015.

4. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session of 2015 (UNW/2015/L.1) and approved the report on its

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second regular session of 2014, held on 15 and 16 September 2014 (UNW/2014/7). The Board also approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2015, to be held from 30 June to 2 July 2015 (see annex I) and adopted the draft annual workplan for 2015 (UNW/2015/L.2).

5. The Executive Board adopted decision 2015/1 on the report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women[1] (see annex II).

III. Opening statements

6. The President of the Executive Board, in his opening remarks, underscored the historical significance of the year 2015, underlining major global events and intergovernmental processes, such as negotiations on financing for development and on the post-2015 development framework, together with the discussions on the sustainable development goals; the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in the context of the twentieth anniversary of its adoption; the 15-year review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security; and the twenty-first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

7. He noted that 2015 offers UN-Women, Member States and other stakeholders an opportunity to make a concerted effort towards ensuring transformative change in the lives of women and girls around the world, stressing that the Entity should play a strong role at every stage of negotiations and in the implementation of outcomes. He underlined the importance of UN-Women in expanding cooperation with stakeholders, especially with the private and/or business sector, while seeking new forms of partnerships, not only from a resource mobilization perspective but also from a rights-based and empowerment standpoint.

8. The President called for collective political support to the Entity in its quest to position itself for the era beyond 2015, expressing the hope that Member States would also significantly increase their financial contributions to the Entity over the course of the year.

9. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, in her opening remarks, gave an overview of items before the Board, also highlighting various current and upcoming events and initiatives, as mentioned by the President, including the "HeforShe" campaign; the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in order to critically evaluate its implementation; and the review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). She expressed her gratitude to Member States and civil society actors for their interest in the review process and the part they played in its implementation, from the provision of resources to hosting review sessions. Speaking of the upcoming fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, she urged Member States to commit to a target of the year 2020, with regard to measurable progress in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and to the year 2030 as the definitive expiry date for gender inequality.

[1] Available from www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/documents/first-regular-session-2015.

10. In the context of the post-2015 development agenda, the Head of the Entity stated that the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of women and the realization of the human rights of women and girls would require increased and renewed investments, commitment to enhance data collection and analyses, accountability frameworks for leaders and established responsibilities for all stakeholders.

11. The Head of the Entity called attention to the report of the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2013, in which the Board had issued UN-Women with an unqualified opinion, for the second consecutive year (see A/69/5/Add.12).

12. She recognized and thanked the Director General and Senior Vice President of Evaluation of the World Bank, in her capacity as Chair of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee, for her leadership, and alluded to the positive findings in the assessment of the evaluation function of UN-Women.

13. Turning to the subject of financing, the Head of the Entity stated that underfunding challenges continued to be a risk and remained her highest priority. She underlined, however, that the year 2014 had seen an increase in the diversification of the pool of donors to the Entity and thanked a number of Member States for significant increases in their contributions. She called for a substantial increase in the allocation of assessed resources to UN-Women in the next programme budget cycle of the United Nations, urging it be increased, from its current modest 0.27 per cent of the programme budget, to $7.7 million (0.54 per cent of the programme budget) and expressed the hope that ongoing structured dialogues on financing would result in the achievement of full funding for the year 2015 and beyond.

IV. Evaluation

14. The Director General and Senior Vice President of Evaluation of the World Bank presented the report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of UN-Women. Speaking of the key conclusions and recommendations, she emphasized that evaluation is central to the achievement of the mission of UN-Women and its transformative role. Evaluation brought evidence and knowledge to its normative, operational and coordination work and complemented its advocacy and research activities. She highlighted some of the other key findings, as follows:

(a) The evaluation function of the Entity is sound, overall;

(b) The current structural and institutional independence of the evaluation function is adequate, but could be further strengthened;

(c) The evaluation function is credible, however, enhancing the quality of evaluations should be prioritized;

(d) UN-Women has established systems aimed at facilitating the use of evaluation, however, more could be done to facilitate the sharing of lessons learned and to enhance the utility of evaluations;

(e) UN-Women has demonstrated leadership in coordination within the United Nations system and national evaluation capacity development; it should

prioritize its coordination work within the system and work with national institutions to move the gender-responsive evaluation agenda forward.

15. Some of the main recommendations were outlined as follows:

(a) The need to recognize evaluation as integral to the mission of UN-Women: UN-Women and its Executive Board should seize the opportunity to recognize evaluation as an integral part of the mission of the Entity; strengthening the evidence base for its normative, operational and coordination roles would enhance effectiveness;

(b) The need to protect and strengthen the independent Evaluation Office: UN-Women should protect the strong performance of the independent Evaluation Office and continue to strengthen the utility, credibility and independence of evaluation, with a particular focus on utility, innovation and country-based partnerships for decentralized evaluations;

(c) The need to incentivize evidence-based work: each member of the senior management team should signal the importance of evaluation, through the demonstrated use of evaluation findings, to incentivize evidence-based normative, operational and coordination work;

(d) Strengthening independence:

(i) Budget provisions should be approved as a separate budget line in the organizational budget framework to be approved by the Executive Board, with the aim of achieving the target of allocating 3 per cent of the programme budget to evaluation;

(ii) A solution should be found to protect the tenure of evaluation staff;

(e) Reviewing the evaluation policy: an internal review, building on the results of the external reviews, should be undertaken to inform any revision of the evaluation policy. The best time to initiate the review of the policy would be 2016, with a view to submitting a revised policy to the Executive Board in early 2017;

(f) Delaying further peer reviews: the Committee did not recommend arranging another peer review in the current context, in the light of the numerous and thorough reviews undertaken in 2014.

16. In presenting the management response to the report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee, both the Head of the Entity and the Director of the independent Evaluation Office of UN-Women thanked the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee for its assessment, underlining acceptance of all its recommendations. While highlighting several areas of ongoing work, it was reiterated that UN-Women would continue to place emphasis on ensuring a strong evaluation function in demonstrating its results and accountability, using evaluation for decision-making, as well as learning from evaluations, to make progress in gender equality and women's empowerment. In short, UN-Women viewed evaluation as a critical aspect that served to shape its ability to deliver on its mandate. The Head of the Entity also thanked the Executive Board for its guidance and support.

17. In response to the opening statements and presentations on the evaluation, several delegations congratulated the President, H.E. Mr. Ib Petersen, on his

election, expressed support to the work of UN-Women and thanked the Head of UN-Women and her dedicated team for their hard work.

18. Several speakers congratulated UN-Women on the positive conclusions of the evaluation. Some underscored its significance in the context of the year 2015, declared as the International Year of Evaluation by EvalPartners, the global evaluation movement. This initiative was designed to advocate and promote evidence-based policy and evaluation, at the international, regional, national and local levels. Some delegations urged the Entity to continue to enhance its evaluation function, through decentralized evaluation and innovative partnerships with national evaluation entities. Delegations spoke of the need to connect decentralized evaluations with national gender-responsive evaluation capacity development, with a view to strengthening nationally owned and driven interventions. One speaker appreciated efforts made to strengthen information disclosure and increase transparency, and another welcomed the learning and training strategy, which could serve to enhance the role of the Entity in various countries, notably, with respect to South-South and triangular cooperation.

19. A number of Member States highlighted the importance of women's economic empowerment and ending violence against women. Some speakers also stressed the importance of ensuring an effective review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015 and one delegation called on all Member States to be engaged in this process.

20. On the issue of the chronic underfunding of UN-Women, delegations called for the Secretary-General to take action in allocating more resources, from assessed contributions to the United Nations, to UN-Women; as well as in taking special measures to address this matter. Delegations underscored the centrality of UN-Women in framing the post-2015 development agenda and in being able to fully respond to the needs of Member States, at their request, in the areas of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In this regard, they reiterated the importance and urgency of ensuring that UN-Women was fully funded in accordance with the original proposal of the Secretary-General. Delegations urged UN-Women to continue to support the stand-alone gender equality goal and the integration of gender perspectives into other sustainable development goals, as well as to engage in and inform the discussions on financing for development. One speaker mentioned the need for UN-Women to widen its partnerships with international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society in the operationalization of its mandate.

V. Briefings

A. Transforming gender relations: the work of UN-Women with men and boys and the HeForShe campaign

21. The HeForShe campaign was launched on 25 September 2014 as a solidarity movement that called upon 1 billion men and boys to stand up against the persisting inequalities faced by women and girls, with the aim of creating solidarity among men and women, providing a common platform, actively mobilizing youth to propel progress towards gender equality and raising funds to support the achievement of the mandate of UN-Women across its four strategic pillars.

22. The Chief of the Civil Society Section explained that it was a flagship campaign with simultaneous work undertaken in the normative, advocacy and programme areas, with HeForShe as the overarching structure. The campaign was designed to drive political views and resources and more in-depth conversation with respect to achieving gender equality by the year 2030. The Head of UN-Women called upon Member States to urge their constituents to sign up online, while stressing that the campaign was not limited to those with access to the Internet, but that the offline activity taking place on behavioural change was of critical importance.

23. Several delegations expressed their support for the HeforShe campaign and commended UN-Women for the initiative, underlining its timeliness and strong potential for engaging a wide cross-section of men and boys from around the world in the promotion of gender equality. One speaker referred to the campaign as an innovative solidarity movement. Another speaker stated that gender equality is a concern for everyone and that many of the related challenges require a structural change in gender relations. Men should therefore be engaged in improving women's economic empowerment and political participation.

B. Informal briefing on the operational response of UN-Women at the country level: response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa

24. The Officer-in-Charge for the UN-Women office in Liberia and a representative of UN-Women in Sierra Leone briefed the Board on the impact of the Ebola outbreak on women, on early recovery efforts and on the lessons learned. In both countries, initial findings suggested a direct link between the outbreak of Ebola and a rise in incidences of gender-based violence. In Sierra Leone, for example, it was found that more than 70 per cent of the quarantined households experienced gender-based violence, and this had therefore become a priority for the Government to address. UN-Women began working with the police in the investigation of such cases. On the other hand, also in Sierra Leone, a positive correlation was found between the Ebola outbreak and incidences of female genital mutilation, whereby, reportedly, no case of female genital mutilation occurred throughout the country during the outbreak. This implied that communities had heeded the call of UN-Women with regard to the practice. The Entity was continuing to support survivors and to assist male survivors also, with social and psychological counselling. The Officer-in-Charge of the Policy and Programme Bureau highlighted the contributions from Japan and Germany at this critical time. The Entity continued to face a funding gap of over $2.6 million to fight against the disease. She called on Member States to help close the gap and thanked the governments of Liberia and Sierra Leone for their close partnership.

25. Member States, including Liberia, expressed appreciation for the work of UN-Women and counted on its continued support. The delegation of Japan signalled its commitment to the fight against Ebola, being among the largest donors to the Entity's response in this regard. A speaker urged the Entity to do more and the entire United Nations system to build on the experiences with a view to improving policy and normative work, while cautioning that the recovery process had only just started and much more remained to be done.

C. Financing the strategic plan, 2014-2017

26. Following the presentation by the Head of UN-Women, several delegations welcomed the informal dialogue and reiterated their support for the Entity. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for example, commended UN-Women for its positive fundraising results and announced its contribution of £12.5 million to the regular resources for the financial year 2015 to 2016. In reaffirming their commitment, delegations such as China and the United Arab Emirates pledged to seriously consider increasing contributions to the Entity. Japan noted a ten-fold increase in its contribution, compared with the previous two years, in spite of economic challenges and a depreciation of currency. The delegation raised concern, however, about the current funding situation and urged other Member States to follow their example by substantially increasing their contributions. UN-Women was complimented by some speakers for its comprehensive resource mobilization plan and efforts to broaden and deepen the donor base. A delegation reiterated the need to expand financing channels and ensure resource allocation for priority areas. Another delegation requested UN-Women to align its resource mobilization plan more closely with its strategic plan and to show linkages between the two.

27. A speaker echoed the statement by the Head of the Entity, saying that the spirit of partnership is key and should be nurtured in a supportive way, and underscored the significance of innovative financing through leveraging untapped national resources.

28. The Entity was also requested to identify the areas of work and which country offices are overfunded or underfunded, in addition to the consequences these elements would have on the ability of UN-Women to implement its strategic plan. The Entity was further urged to make available on its website information that would allow Member States to monitor results and resource allocation related to the strategic plan targets, at the regional and global levels. Delegations looked forward to the structured dialogue on financing included in the agenda of the second regular session of the Executive Board.

VI. Audit

29. Several Member States welcomed the presentation of the report of the Board of Auditors and the related management response. Delegations requested that this should become a standing item on the agenda of the first regular sessions of the Executive Board, so as to allow the Board to adopt pertinent decisions. They commended the Entity for the unqualified audit opinion and the information contained in the report on the implementation of recommendations. Delegations urged UN-Women to take prompt steps to fully implement the audit recommendations and address the identified risks. UN-Women was requested to include details in future reports of measures taken to ensure continued vigilance in preventing and identifying procurement irregularities and other fraudulent practices, and of effective follow-up on such cases. The Entity was urged to strengthen capacity in improving systems, internal controls and asset management, particularly at the regional, subregional and country levels.

VII. Closing of the session

30. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women welcomed delegations' shared embrace of the Entity's mandate, which was evident throughout the day's discussions, in addition to the constructive feedback provided. She underscored her heartfelt appreciation for investments made in the Entity and looked forward to continued collaboration towards the year 2030. She took note of salient comments, such as those regarding the importance of evaluation and the need to adhere to the recommendations arising therefrom, as well as the appreciation expressed for the efforts made so far by the Entity. She welcomed the reference to the importance of building national capacity in the implementation of country programmes, which are critical for UN-Women to make a positive difference for women on the ground. She highlighted the upcoming high-profile initiatives surrounding the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which would continue until September 2015, and urged all Member States to participate.

31. The President, in his concluding remarks, reviewed the day's deliberations and looked forward to the year ahead. He thanked all members of the Executive Board, including the newly-elected Bureau, for a fruitful and productive session and thanked members of civil society for their contributions to the session.

Annex I

Proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session, 30 June to 2 July 2015

Provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters.
2. Strategic plan.
3. Evaluation.
4. Financial, budgetary and administrative matters.
5. Pledging event.
6. Audit matters.
7. Field visits.
8. Other matters.

Tentative workplan

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Tuesday, 30 June	10 a.m.-11.30 a.m.		Opening of the session • Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women
		1	Organizational matters • Adoption of the annotated agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2015 • Adoption of the report on the first regular session of 2015
	11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.	2	Strategic plan • Annual report of the Under Secretary-General/ Executive Director
	1.20 p.m.-2.30 p.m.		*Informal consultations on draft decisions*
	3-6 p.m.	2	Strategic plan (*continued*) *Informal consultations on draft decisions*
	7 p.m.		*Reception*
Wednesday 1 July	10 a.m.-11.30 p.m.	3	Evaluation • Report on the UN-Women evaluation function, 2014

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
			• Corporate evaluation on the contribution of UN-Women to women's economic empowerment
			• Management response to the corporate evaluation
			• Joint systemic review of gender policies in United Nations entities
	11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.	4	Financial, budgetary and administrative matters
			• Discussion on the draft integrated budget for 2016-2017
	1.20 p.m.-2.30 p.m.		*Informal consultations on draft decisions*
	3 p.m.-5 p.m.	5	Pledging event
	5 p.m.-6 p.m.		*Informal consultations on draft decisions*
Thursday, 2 July	10 a.m.-11 a.m.	6	Audit matters
			• Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period 1 January to 31 December 2014
			• Report of the Audit Advisory Committee
	11 a.m.-12 p.m.		Special briefing on the operational response of UN-Women at the country level (Afghanistan)
	12 a.m.-1 p.m.	7	Field visits
			• Report on the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/the United Nations Population Fund/the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Children's Fund, UN-Women and the World Food Programme to Jordan, 25 April-2 May 2015
			• Report on the field visit by the Bureau to Viet Nam, 7-12 December 2014
		8	Other matters
			Adoption of draft decisions
		1	Organizational matters
			• Approval of the provisional agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2015
			Closing of the session

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
			• Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women
	1.15 p.m.-2.30 p.m.		Side event organized by the Civil Society Section of UN-Women
			• Funding for gender equality in the new development agenda

Annex II

Decision adopted at the first regular session for 2015

2015/1
Report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

The Executive Board,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Global Evaluation Advisory Committee on the external assessments of the evaluation function of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women);

2. *Commends* UN-Women for the establishment of a strong enabling environment for evaluation, the strong performance of the independent Evaluation Office, based on the standards of independence, credibility and utility, the leadership of UN-Women in promoting gender equality and responsive evaluation through coordination efforts within the United Nations system and through partnerships, including at the country level, and for fostering innovative partnerships for the development of national evaluation capacity;

3. *Emphasizes* that programme countries should have greater ownership and leadership in the evaluation of all forms of assistance, welcomes the role of UN-Women in reinforcing the development of national evaluation capacity, and reiterates its request to UN-Women to continue its efforts in this regard;

4. *Takes note* of recommendation number 4, in paragraph 18 (a) of the report, to incorporate a separate budget line for evaluation activities to be considered by the Executive Board in the integrated budget for 2016-2017, with the aim of achieving the target of allocating 3 per cent of the programme budget thereto;

5. *Requests* UN-Women to protect the strong performance of the independent Evaluation Office and to continue to strengthen the utility, credibility and independence of evaluation, in addition to continuing to strengthen innovation and country-based partnerships for decentralized evaluations;

6. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to demonstrate the importance of evaluation and to enhance the use of evaluation recommendations in its work;

7. *Requests* UN-Women to continue to strengthen its evaluation capacities and to allocate adequate human and financial resources to the independent Evaluation Office and the overall evaluation function;

8. *Also requests* UN-Women to continue to promote reporting against the evaluation indicator of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and to conduct analysis of the reports produced;

9. *Further requests* UN-Women to carry out an internal review of the current evaluation policy, including with regard to the independence of the

evaluation function, and to report thereon within the framework of the annual report on the evaluation function, with the review to be considered by the Executive Board at its annual session for 2016.